A Fundamental Question

Quid Est Veritas?

A fundamental question now as in centuries past is what is the 'truth' about a person, about an event, or about some-thing supra-personal such as some -ism or -ology or group or movement which several or many persons believe in, or accept, or belong to, or adhere to.

The English word 'truth' suggests conformity with fact, agreement with reality, accuracy of representation; with the Latin veritas and the Greek ἀλήθεια (alétheia) suggesting a similar sense but also and importantly, in regard to the Greek, of what is disclosed having been previously concealed for whatever reason or from whatever cause, as for example in the following:

(i) vv. 5-6 of tractate XIII of the Corpus Hermeticum,

> Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ψεύδῃ· τὸ γὰρ θνητὸν εἶδος καθ ᾽ ἡμέραν ἀλλάσσεται· χρόνῳ γὰρ τρέπεται εἰς αὔξησιν καὶ μείωσιν, ὡς ψεῦδος.
>
> Τί οὖν ἀληθές ἐστιν, ὦ Τρισμέγιστε
>
> In that you have been deceived, for the form of the deathful alters every day: changed by the seasons, it grows then withers and so deceives.
>
> What then - Trismegistus - is the actuality? [1]

(ii) v. 1567 of the Agamemnon,

> ἐς τόνδ᾽ ἐνέβης ξὺν ἀληθείᾳ χρησμόν
> until now, what the oracle revealed has been followed

(iii) In 3: 21 in the Gospel of John,

> ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν
> literally, "they practising the disclosing". [2]

Replacement And Concealment

The quotation from tractate XIII of the Corpus Hermeticum expresses something of the reality of the change that occurs in Nature and in ourselves as children of Gaia, [3] and also in those constructs we mortals manufacture be these constructs material or based on denotata but which denotata like material ones do not embody what is living and part of Nature. Instead, denotata express an idea, an ideal, which can and often do form the basis of some -ism or some -ology. [4] That is,

> πάντα γὰρ σώματα ζῶντα ἔμψυχα, τὰ δὲ μὴ ζῶντα ὕλη πάλιν καθ' ἑαυτήν ἐστι
> all living beings presence life while the non-living are substance only
>
> Tractate XI, v.10, Νοῦς πρὸς Ἑρμῆν. [5]

For all denotata by their physis [6] are substances which require mortals to embody and transmit them verbally or by writing (be it handwritten, printed, or in digital form) and given the physis of mortals both the embodiment and the transmission will naturally change, vary, over causal time.

Hence why a denotata such as a specific 'national identity' will vary as the population within a specifically named 'nation' changes over decades and centuries as a result of various factors be they immigration, emigration; invasion, occupation, by others; economic decline; environmental factors; education; or through the zeitgeist of that 'nation' changing or being changed as for example by an internal revolution which replaces one -ology or religious belief with another.

Hence why a certain 'truth' accepted somewhere for a while, be it decades or centuries, can and does change, or is or becomes concealed and replaced with another 'truth'. Most ideas, ideals, -isms and -ologies present or are said or believed to present a certain 'truth' or certain 'truths', for example about ourselves, or about some-thing such as 'happiness', or about some existence after death, or about some type of apparently needed or 'better' governance.

How then can we discover, reveal, the truth about a person, about an event, or about some-thing such as some -ism or -ology or group or movement?

It is my view, derived from personal experience, from considering questions of exegesis, and from translating and commenting on Greek texts such as the Corpus Hermeticum and the Gospel of John, that pathei-mathos, empathy, and personal research over an extended period of time using primary sources, [7] are a means whereby we as individuals can answer the question of what is the truth about someone, some event, or about some-thing such as some -ism or -ology or group or movement; and that if we do not use such means then it is incumbent on us, as mortal fallible beings capable of reason and possessed of the ability to apprehend the numinous and thus the error of hubris, [8] to refrain from commenting on what we have not personally discovered.

For,

> οὐκ οἶδ᾽: ἐφ᾽ οἷς γὰρ μὴ φρονῶ σιγᾶν φιλῶ
> I do not know: about things I cannot judge for myself, I prefer to be silent. [9]

Similarly,

> σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ
> noetic sapientia is in silence [10]

David Myatt
Spring Equilux
2025

Ξ Ξ Ξ

1. DWM, *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, Translation and Commentary, p.148. https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

'Deathful' is my translation of θνητός used in several tractates, qv. Poemandres 14, tractate VIII:1, and tractate XI:7ff, inspired as it was by Chapman's poetic translation of the Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns: "that with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man".

I also used it in my rendering of an enigmatic verse attributed to Heraclitus:

> ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον

τεθνεῶτες. (Fragment 62, Diels-Krantz)

The deathless are deathful, the deathful deathless, with one living the other's dying with the other dying in that other's life.

2. Translated by DWM, *The Gospel According to John,* Translation And Commentary, Volume I, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/myatt-gospel-john-1-5.pdf

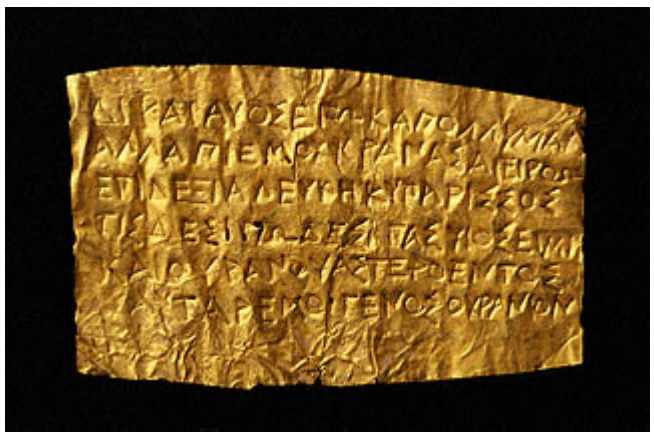
The context is:

16 οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον.
17 οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνῃ τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ’ ἵνα σωθῇ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ.
18 ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται· ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται, ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ.
19 αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ κρίσις ὅτι τὸ φῶς ἐλήλυθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἠγάπησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον τὸ σκότος ἢ τὸ φῶς· ἦν γὰρ αὐτῶν πονηρὰ τὰ ἔργα.
20 πᾶς γὰρ ὁ φαῦλα πράσσων μισεῖ τὸ φῶς καὶ οὐκ ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα μὴ ἐλεγχθῇ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ·
21 ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα φανερωθῇ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ἐν θεῷ ἐστιν εἰργασμένα.

Theos so loved the world that he offered up his only begotten son so that all those trusting in him would not perish but might have life everlasting. For Theos did not dispatch his son to the world to condemn the world, but rather that the world might be rescued through him. Whosoever trusts in him is not condemned while whomsoever does not trust is condemned for he has not trusted in the Nomen of the only begotten son of Theos. And this is the condemnation: That the Phaos arrived in the world but mortals loved the darkness more than the Phaos, for their deeds were harmful. For anyone who does what is mean dislikes the Phaos and does not come near the Phaos lest their deeds be exposed. But whomsoever practices disclosure goes to the Phaos so that their deeds might be manifest as having been done through Theos.

3.

Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
I am a child of Gaia and the starry heavens



Gold funerary tablet (c. 200 BCE) found at Eleutherna, Crete,
of the kind presumed to be associated with an aural ἱερός λόγος (esoteric mythos),
all of which funerary items have inscriptions similar to the above.
qv. Tractate III, Ιερός Λόγος, Corpus Hermeticum

4. In regard to abstractions, qv. (i) *Developing The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos*, pp.530-534 of *Selected Writings 2012-2024*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/selected-writings-dwm.pdf and (ii) *Numinosity, Denotata, Empathy, And The Hermetic Tradition*, pp.6-12 of *Selected Writings*, op.cit.

5. As noted in my commentary on tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum: (i) *substance*, ὕλη, the materia of 'things' and living beings, contrasted with οὐσία, essence. qv. Pœmandres 10, (ii) *presence life*, ἔμψυχος.

6.

> "Physis is usually translated as either 'Nature' (as if 'the natural world', and the physical cosmos beyond, are meant) or as the character (the nature) of a person. However, while the context - of the original Greek text - may suggest (as often, for example, in Homer and Herodotus) such a meaning as such English words impute, physis philosophically (as, for example, in Heraclitus and Aristotle and the Corpus Hermeticum) has specific ontological meanings. Meanings which are lost, or glossed over, when physis is simply translated either as 'Nature' or - in terms of mortals - as (personal) character.
>
> Ontologically, as Aristotle makes clear, physis denotes the being of those beings who or which have the potentiality (the being) to change, be changed, or to develope. That is, to become, or to move or be moved; as for example in the motion (of 'things') and the 'natural unfolding' or growth, sans an external cause, that living beings demonstrate.
>
> However, and crucially, physis is not - for human beings - some abstract 'essence' (qv. Plato's ἰδέᾳ/εἶδος) but rather a balance between the being that it is, it was, and potentially might yet be. That is, in Aristotelian terms, it is a meson - μέσον - of being and 'not being'; and 'not being' in the sense of not yet having become what it could be, and not now being what it used to be. Hence why, for Aristotle, a manifestation of physis - in terms of the being of mortals - such as arête (ἀρετή) is a meson, a balance of things, and not, as it is for Plato, some fixed 'form' - some idea, ideal - which as Plato wrote "always exists, and has no genesis. It does not die, does not grow, does not decay."
>
> According to my understanding of Heraclitus, physis also suggests - as in Fragment 1 - the 'natural' being of a being which we mortals have a tendency to cover-up or conceal."

The Concept Of Physis, pp.500-502, *Selected Writings*, op.cit.

7. In the matter of exegesis refer to (i) *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God*, pp.406-432 of *Selected Writings*, op.cit. (ii) *Religion, Exegesis, And The Fallacy Of Appeal To Authority*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/dwm-religion-exegesis-fallacy-1.pdf (iii) *Exegesis And Pathei-Mathos*, pp.52-54 of *A Child Of Gaia*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/dwm-child-of-gaia.pdf

In the matter of pathei-mathos and empathy refer to *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, pp.459-524, of *Selected Writings*, op.cit.

In the matter of personal experience refer to *Research, Primary Sources, And Pathei-Mathos*, pp.794-5, in

Selected Writings, op.cit.

In the matter of primary sources:

> "Among primary sources are original manuscripts germane to the subject or to a historical person, such as in the case of Jesus of Nazareth, Papyrus Bodmer in the Vatican Library, and in the case of Sappho fragments of papyri such as P. Oxyrhynchus. XV, 1787 fr. 1 and 2; archaeological or fossil remains from an historical period; contemporaneous manuscripts, letters, diaries, memoirs, personal journals, interviews, speeches, and other materials which describe or relate (i) events in which a person or persons participated in or observers of, (ii) ideas or creations, such as music, a philosophy, works of literature, poetry, and art-work which a person was responsible for and also their published writings in their original language, and authenticated manuscripts published and unpublished.
>
> The writings, opinions, and conclusions of others about such subjects or persons are secondary sources, with tertiary sources a collection or compendium of such secondary sources. In regard to the original language of primary sources, if a person venturing an opinion about such material cannot read the original language, and does not personally translate such a work or passages from such a work and thus has to use the translations of others then opinions and conclusions about that work are secondary sources."
>
> *Research, Primary Sources, And Pathei-Mathos*, pp.794-5, in *Selected Writings*, op.cit

8. An awareness of the numinous is what predisposes us not to commit the error, the folly, of ὕβρις.

> "The numinous is θειότης, divinity-presenced, as in tractate XI v. 11 of the Corpus Hermeticum, θειότητα μίαν, and as in Plutarch, De Pythiae Oraculis, 407a, 398a-f. The numinous is essentially what is, or what manifests or can manifest or remind us of (what can reveal) that which is felt, experienced, or understood as sacred, numinal, sublime, divine, awe-inspiring, beautiful, and beyond our ability, as mortals, to control or meaningfully express through the medium of words. For Christians, it is considered to be God; for Muslims, Allah; for the Romans, divinitas; for others ancient and modern, it was and is considered to be expressible, or intimated, by mythoi and presenced in ὁ θεὸς, the deity, and/or by θεοί, the gods."
>
> Notes On War, Suffering, And Personal Judgement,
> pp.19-22 of *A Child Of Gaia*, op.cit.

The numinous is also presenced in an awareness of Gaia (Nature) as a living being which we are mortal emanations of.

9. Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 569.

10. Corpus Hermeticum, tractate XI, v.2

From my commentary on that tractate:

> *noetic sapientia*. For a variety of reasons, I have used the term *noetic sapientia* to denote σοφία νοερὰ.

i) The metaphysical terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός occur in Proclus, qv. *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentari*, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, II 733 and IV 887. Interestingly, Proclus associates νοερός with the three 'septenary planets' Mercury, Venus, and the Sun.

Here, σοφία νοερὰ may well suggest a particular hermetic principle which requires contextual interpretation.

ii) As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 29 - where I used the Latin *sapientia* in respect of σοφία - in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in the Poemandres tractate *sapientia* (for σοφία) requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation, as Sophia (for σοφία) does in tractate XI where it is there suggestive, as with Aion, Kronos, and Kosmos, of a personified metaphysical principle.

iii) In respect of νοερός, the English word 'intellectual' has too many irrelevant modern connotations, with phrases such as 'intellectual wisdom' and 'the wisdom that understands' - for σοφία νοερὰ - unhelpful regarding suggesting a relevant philosophical meaning. Hence the use of the term 'noetic' which suggests a particular type of apprehension - a perceiveration - whereby certain knowledge and a particular understanding can be ascertained.

Thus, *noetic sapientia* implies that the knowledge and understanding that is noetically acquired transcends - or at least is different from - that acquired both (a) through observation of and deductions concerning phenomena and (b) through the use of denotatum whereby beings are given 'names' and assigned to abstractive categories with such naming and such categories assumed to provide knowledge and understanding of the physis of those beings. [In respect of physis, qv. the comment on φύσεως μιᾶς in section 12.]

In addition, given what follows - ἐν σιγῇ, 'in silence' - such knowledge and understanding does not require nor depend upon words whether they be spoken or written or thought. Hence, the 'source' of mortals is in, can be known and understood through, the silence of noetic sapientia.

Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates, op.cit.

°°°°°°

Bibliography

° *A Child Of Gaia*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/dwm-child-of-gaia.pdf

° *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, Translation and Commentary, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

° *The Gospel According to John,* Translation And Commentary, Volume I, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/myatt-gospel-john-1-5.pdf

° *Selected Writings 2012-2024*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/selected-writings-dwm.pdf

° Greek text, Gospel of John: Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th revised edition. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart. 2012.

Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 4.0 license